- The Group has accorded due autonomy to States in defining and developing their own application software to address State specific functionalities while at the same time recommending the development of certain core common functions centrally to interoperability, speedier and effective implementation of the project.

- The Group also recommended the adoption of multi-mode training interventions using ICTs and satellite-based technologies.

Powers to local bodies

500. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is envisaging any new programmes to give powers to local bodies in implementing the State and Centrally devised developmental programmes;

(b) how many programmes under the Bharat Nirman scheme are implemented with the help of Panchayats; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Article 243 G of the Constitution already provides for devolution of powers and authority to the Panchayats so as to enable them to function as institutions of self-government with respect to—

I. making plans for economic development and social justice, and

II. implementation of plans and schemes as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.

Similarly, the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 also provides for devolution of functional and financial powers to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Accordingly, it is for State Legislatures and State Governments to devolve appropriate functions, functionaries and funds to PRIs and ULBs. Nevertheless, it has been the endeavor of the Union Government to impress upon State Governments the need to scientifically and simultaneously devolve functions functionaries and funds to local bodies to enable them to function as institutions of self-government.

(b) and (c) There are six components of the Bharat Nirman Programme.

(i) **Rural Housing** Programme is being implemented through Indira Awas Yojana (IAY). Under Bharat Nirman Programme, 60 lakh houses are envisaged to be constructed during four years *i.e.* from 2005-06 to 2008-2009. Under the scheme, PRIs Play an important role in the selection of beneficiaries. Gram Sabha does selection of beneficiaries from the eligible BPL households/Permanent IAY waitlist, wherever it has been finalized. To ensure transparency in the selection of beneficiaries, Gram Panchayats are also instructed to finalize Permanent IAY waitlist and publish the same

in booklet form. These local bodies are also required to paint the list on the walls of panchayat buildings.

(ii) Under **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana** (PMGSY), District Plan identifies the priorities of the District Rural Roads Plan. Core Network and Block Level Master Plan are first approved by Intermediate Panchayats and then by District Panchayats. District Panchayats recommend list of roads to be taken up under PMGSY. Consultation is required to be held with the Gram Panchayats for determining the alignment of the proposed roads.

(iii) **Accelerated Rural Water Supply** Programme (ARWSP) has a clear thrust on putting Panchayats in the forefront of implementation of drinking water schemes. The Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development has adopted an MOU based approach by which States are persuaded to assign Panchayats the entire gamut of drinking water intervention in rural areas. Panchayats also act as custodians of assets besides carrying out social mobilization under the scheme.

(iv) **Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana** (RGGVY) is the major rural electrification scheme of the Ministry of Power, which aims at providing electricity to all villages and habitations in four years and provides access to electricity to all rural households. This programme is one of the major components of Bharat Nirman. The approach is to strengthen electricity distribution infrastructure by establishing Rural Electricity Distribution Backbone (REDB) with at least a 33/11 KV sub-station, Village Electrification infrastructure (VEI) with at least a Distribution Transformer in each village or hamlet, and stand-alone grids with generation where grid supply is not feasible. In remote villages the objectives of the RGGVY are proposed to be met through renewable energy and the programme is managed at the central level by the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES). The Scheme envisages the management of Rural Distribution through franchisees and the guidelines stipulate that Panchayats will be involved with franchising.

(v) The Department of Telecommunications is committed to expanding **rural connectivity** through a slew of measures so that rural areas can access information and transact business. This includes connecting block headquarters with fiber optic network, using wireless technology to achieve last mile connectivity and operating kiosks through partnership of citizens, Panchayats, civil society organizations, the Private Sector and the Government. Guidelines have also been issued to BSNL, the implementing authority, for the procedure to be followed for selection of custodian for provision of village public telephones in the villages to be covered under the scheme.

(vi) The **irrigation** component of Bharat Nirman envisages creation of irrigation potential of 10 million hectares through major and medium irrigation projects and minor irrigation schemes. Projects for creation of irrigation potential under Bharat Nirman are implemented by the State Governments. State Governments have been advised to include Gram Sabhas and Panchayati Raj Institutions, Particularly in minor irrigation schemes and water-shed development.

Rural Business Hub Scheme

501. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Rural Business Hub (RBH) scheme has been jointly launched by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and his Ministry in the State of Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the salient features of this scheme;

(c) whether it is one of the objectives of RBH to involve the industry in the improvement/refinement of locally available resources like stitching of chikan garments and produce international-quality products; and

(d) if so, how many villages have been included in this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is actively pursuing the lead role suggested by Hon'ble Prime Minister on taking the benefits of rapid economic development to the rural areas of the country through the Rural Business Hubs (RBH) Scheme. In June 2004, while addressing the very first conference of Chief Ministers on the subject "Poverty Alleviation and Rural Prosperity through Panchayati Raj", the Hon'ble Prime Minister has stated that "Panchayat Raj" is the medium to transform rural India into 700 million opportunities. The key instrument for integrating economic reforms with institutional reforms in the countryside is Gandhiji's goal of "Poorna Swaraj" through "Gram Swaraj". In November 2004, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj organized a National Presentation of RBH which was attended by 1000 representatives of Panchayats and 200 representatives of Confederation of Indian industry (CII). A Joint RBH Council under the Co-Chairmanship of Minister of Panchayati Raj and the then President of CII was set up at the national level. State RBH Councils have been set up in 15 States. The objective of RBH initiative is to promote RBHs across the country by bringing to the attention of business houses, both in the public and private sectors, the unique products of skills in each development block deriving from local resource endowment. In consultation with State Government and Panchayats, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has identified local resources and skills in more than 1000 development blocks of the country. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is thus attempting to develop and promote Public-Private-Panchayat Partnership in which the Panchayats will facilitate convergence of extant schemes of State and Central Government, together with initiatives of Panchayats, financial institutions and promotional bodies. This will help develop a holistic and integrated partnership between decentralized rural production units and larger corporate entities.